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FOR POLITICAL COMMITTEE INFORMATION ONLY

Dear Comrades,

Attached is an unedited transcript of the report Ralph Levitt, speaking as the formal representative of the For A Proletarian Orientation grouping, gave in debate with Clifton DeBerry to the Oakland/Berkeley branch on June 22. A virtually identical report was given to the San Francisco branch by Comrade Levitt, in debate with Robert Himmel, on June 20, reporting in the same capacity. It was also, with some additions, and changes, the report given by Comrade Lauren Charous for the Proletarian Orientation Tendency to the Los Angeles branch in debate with Milt Alvin on July 11.

Comrades in the Bay Area proposed printing these debates in the Discussion Bulletin but Comrade Levitt rejected this proposal. This transcript is for the information of Political Committee members only.

Comradely,


Jack

VERBATIM TRANSCRIPT

PRESENTATION BY RALPH LEVITT TO OAKLAND/BERKELEY BRANCH

IN DEBATE WITH CLIFTON DeBERRY

June 22, 1971

I'm the so-called "mystery speaker" for the minority; I'm sure I'm not too much of a mystery to most of the comrades here. Let me state, let me say this, that due to the question of work hours and so on, although I'm giving, I've been asked by the minority supporters on the branch Executive Committee to give the report, I may not be giving the summary, depending on when that summary is scheduled. We'll have to see about that question.

I hope I don't have the experience I had in San Francisco when I spoke. One of the comrades over there, Carole Seidman, said that she was sympathetic to the document that, and point of view of the minority until I spoke; then after that, she wasn't so sympathetic. So I hope I don't scare anybody away. That's not our intention, and we have to be judged, basically, I think, by our written documents. But I hope to be able to elaborate some of the ideas that we stand for and provide some of that analysis that was so urgently requested by the majority speaker. (from floor: Could you talk into the mike a little bit? Levitt: Sure.)

Let us state at the outset the central thesis and thrust of the minority tendency, the principal statement of which is the document entitled: "For A Proletarian Orientation," written by Comrades Barbara Gregorich, Bill Massey, Phil Passen and John McCann. The Socialist Workers Party, and its predecessor organizations, and this applies as well to the international Trotskyist movement, has always had as its crucial and decisive task the creation of a genuine proletarian revolutionary combat party, a party proletarian in composition, outlook and program. This characterizes and epitomizes the life of our movement in the 1930's -- witness the high points of the Minneapolis labor struggles and the historic fight in 1939 and 1940 against the petty-bourgeois opposition led by Shachtman and Burnham.

This was true as well of the period of the Forties and Fifties. We need only note our important intervention into the strike wave that followed the war, The American Theses, Cannon's The Coming American Revolution speech, and our defeat of the Cochran-Bartell-Clark grouping in the party.

Then came a critical break in our development. The dry years of McCarthyite reaction which threatened to destroy our party, and which did in fact weaken and debilitate us. In the second half of the 1950's, our party -- correctly -- turned in the direction of student and intellectual circles in order to recruit the human material for the coming upsurge of the American working class. This began as a temporary tactical turn corresponding to the concrete difficulties which confronted us. The long delay in the expected return of the workers as a class to political action, has shaped the course of the party's direction and has been accepted and acquiesced to by the party leadership. In recent years what was originally a temporary tactical turn has become a full-blown strategic orientation with the substitution of the students and other petty-bourgeois layers in society for the workers as the motive and decisive force in the socialist revolution. This is attested to our international youth resolution, by our evaluation of the events in France in May of '68, and the campus turmoil around the Cambodian invasion of the USA last year; by the revision of our

traditional attitude on the necessity of a proletarian class composition, by our abstention from working class social movements such as the Black and Brown struggle and the GI antiwar fight, and by our stubborn denial, that is the leadership's stubborn denial of the imperative to root our membership and our cadres in the industrial plants and in the industrial working class.

Slowly, at first, then ever more rapidly the Socialist Workers Party has become in tune with the history we have cited above. The Socialist Workers Party has entered upon a deepgoing process of the petty-bourgeoisification of the party. That is, the overwhelming majority of our ranks are from petty-bourgeois backgrounds. Their political day-to-day work is in the milieu of the campus, and, most important, are in the process of adopting a petty-bourgeois orientation to the tasks of party building and making revolutionary social change.

This development is highlighted and underscored by an insight into the current party leadership and many of the leading cadres and much of the membership of the party as well. We are here of course, when I say the leading, the leaders of the party I'm discussing the young leadership, since they have become the directors of the national office and the National Committee, both in numbers and in actual role. But we don't lose sight of the fact that the old leaders of the Dobbs-Kerry generation who themselves were steeled in union and labor struggles, are now decades removed from the plants, and that the middle generation of the party, a representative of which is Comrade DeBerry, has by and large, by and large, been graduated into skilled job categories or out of the class altogether.

The young leadership of the party is a petty-bourgeois grouping. Petty-bourgeois in training and orientation -- I want to discuss this for a moment, because it's a real fact of our party life. We don't raise this question in order to snipe or hurl accusations. We're discussing it because it's a real, an important fact of the life of the party. The young leaders are petty-bourgeois in background and origin, that's clear. These comrades -- and I have every intention of naming them, since they have names -- comrades like Comrades Barnes, Sheppard, Camejo, Waters, Jones, Seigle, Horowitz, Britton, Jenness, Wulp, Stapleton, Benson, Myers, Stone, so on -- a whole leading cadre of the party. These comrades are from privileged middle-class comfortable families trained at bourgeois academic institutions which you're familiar with. This is not decisive. We don't judge revolutionaries purely by their class background, although it is a factor of some significance and always has been so in the party.

Secondly and more importantly, their lives since joining the movement have been outside the ranks of the labor movement. They have primarily worked as party functionaries and in the student radical milieu. A few, still in their early thirties, have spent the totality of their adult lives, the totality on the payroll of the Socialist Workers Party for as long as a decade. No experience in the unions. No contact with the life and realities of the class. No time in any industrial job, no familiarity with the young workers, Black white and Brown, of their own generation. Once again, this is not decisive. Other revolutionaries have had similar experiences.

However, these comrades breathe and live the air of the student perspective. They are opposed to the party participating in the struggles of any section of the class. They embrace -- and they use the words often and constantly -- they embrace those various social struggles of petty-bourgeois derivation. They believe in the students as the epicenter of the world revolution and radicalization. Petty-bourgeois in origin, in training and experience, and in their view of social struggle. This, this combination of factors, comrades, is decisive. It is decisive. There are no other indicators in our party, in our party life, of their petty-bourgeois character.

They will not announce themselves, as no sane political person would, as petty-bourgeois, put a label on their forehead. If politics were that easy and simple, we would just hand out blueprints, and everything would be accounted for.

But this is no accident. The class derivation and perspective of the leadership closely approximates the general development of our party as a whole. Why, then, don't most comrades see it as we, the supporters of the minority document, do. Because it is a process. And it is very difficult to see a process while in it and part of it. This is the virtue, the leading virtue, of the authors and supporters of the proletarian orientation document. We can see the process for what it is, alert the party to the inevitable dangers of this process, and offer a concrete outline of the ways for the party to reorient and overcome the present danger of total petty-bourgeoisification

which will affect our program. We will repeat this many times; it is a process which confronts us, and this is the key to it.

Let's look at it from a different angle. If the Socialist Workers Party in 1956 had been presented at that time, and cognizant of the coming historical developments, with the party reality today, it would have recoiled in horror, and taken definite steps to protect the party against the pitfalls that lay ahead. Do you think the party then would have endorsed the present prevailing views of the lack of importance of the class composition of the party, of our non-class approach to the question of women's liberation, of the international youth resolution, of the so-called revolutionary character of the homosexual groups and demands, of the primacy of the students in the socialist revolution? The answer is clear: No. It has taken the fifteen-year-long process ~~to~~ prepare the party to swallow the present majority position, and it could not be accepted without that process. Don't forget, comrades, many parties have succumbed to these processes, molecular erosions of their programs and orientation. The Second International, and the present Lanka Sama Samaja Party are good examples of this, but at the very ends of the process when all is clear for the world to see.

Let's try to illustrate this by an analogy. The party today, and many of its cadres, are, in our view like the swimmer in the ocean. If you've ever been swimming at an ocean beach, you've noticed a very striking phenomena, as we have. You leave your blankets, radio, beachball, sunglasses, cigarettes, beer, friends, whatever you come with, at a certain spot, and then, gingerly at first, enter the salty brine a step at a time. Then you swim after a few moments, and you become involved in the swimming. You have the distinct feeling that you've stayed roughly in the same place. Have you ever had this experience? But then, after a while, you look back to find your blankets and so on, and you discover something very startling, and it's always startling the first time it happens to you, you've drifted hundreds of yards away. The current, the tides have carried you beyond your original point of departure. It then takes a very strenuous effort to make your way back, although you didn't count on that when you took the first plunge. Of course, if you don't care about your original point of departure, if you don't care about your original intentions, you can just keep drifting. Eventually, you'll lose sight of it and be carried hither and yon by the tide, by the newness of the present radicalization, by every development that takes place in the radical milieu, cut adrift from your historical and Marxist perspective and foundations.

This corresponds to what has happened, in our view, to the party leadership and the party majority. The proof of this is to compare our present positions with those of the past. We will discuss this at length later on.

The minority attitude is crystal clear, and totally reasonable, besides ^{being} fully in the party tradition. We feel that the process which has overtaken the party is reversible. Is reversible, but requiring a strenuous effort that involves swimming against the tide of the current class character of the radicalization and preparing us to fulfill our duty when the heavy legions of the working class arrive on the scene as they inevitably will. We offer no panaceas, no shortcuts, but the tools to regear the party machine and thwart what we feel is the current danger. That is, we insist the party must begin a conscious policy of proletarianization, meaning what? Of colonizing comrades into industry and the class; of reorienting our work in the various social movements in a proletarian direction, of combatting the faulty ideas that have taken root among us; of basing ourselves on the Transitional Program of the Fourth International .

Now comrades can, and undoubtedly will and have the right to ask the following question: why now? You didn't protest early, and this is a party policy which you are contesting, which has been operative for a number of years. Moreover, most of the minority itself is of student background. Three of the four authors of your document were recruited on or in close proximity to the campus. Why do you inveigh against a course which has brought the party hundreds of recruits, helped us to expand our press and rejuvenate our ranks, and spread our influence. This question is in order, and the answer we think should elucidate and strengthen the position of the minority.

First of all, we are not, and we have stated this to the point of redundancy for those who don't hear so well, we are not opposed to political work and recruitment among the students. Quite the opposite. It is correct to do so, to do such work, today, and will be so in the foreseeable future given the increase in size and importance of the university system and the student radicalization. Such an orientation, such an intervention on the campus does not conflict with a proletarian orientation, except to formalists

and dullards, in our opinion. The point is this: are we going to wait, and dissipate our gains on the campus, or use them to the fullest advantage of the party and for the revolutionary process?

The crux of our point, however, is this. We are standing up now and countering the party leadership's orientation for this reason: we have seen warning signs, danger signals posted along the way, that our approach is passing from quantity to quality, substituting a new strategic orientation for the traditional program of Leninism and proletarian revolutionism. Disarming the party, preparing the way for disastrous occurrences and calamities ahead, and that's not pessimistic. We have an optimistic view of the revolutionary process, but not of the course that the party's involved in. We have a orientation to change that policy. That's our method, comrades, our Marxist method. To generalize from the past and present and prepare for the future. We don't want to see the party march forward like lemmings into a fatal sea that it had not prepared for.

What are these warning signs? What are these so-called warning signs that the minority points to? We plan to detail them -- some of them, only a few of them, and for this we'll need a little time.

We can start with the singular fact of the party's confusion as to where we stand today in the ongoing process of the contemporary radicalization in America. This confusion originates with the softening and blunting of our traditional proletarian orientation and perspective. Comrade George Breitman gave his famous speech, which Comrade DeBerry referred to more than once in his presentation, before last year's Oberlin Conference, and he has been celebrated throughout the party for his farsightedness in making this oration. What does Breitman have to say (and I think DeBerry accurately summarized it)? Breitman says that:

Since the title of this talk does ^{not} convey fully the main proposition that will be presented and defended here, it would be best to begin by stating what the proposition is: the present radicalization in the United States, which has not yet reached its peak [true] is as genuine and authentic a radicalization as any this country has experienced in the 20th century. [Well, that's certainly true.] In addition, it is the biggest, the deepest and the broadest and therefore the most threatening for the ruling class and the most promising for revolutionaries.

We may supplement Comrade Breitman's assertion, as Comrade DeBerry himself has done. This is not the thesis of Breitman, but the operating assumption of the leadership of the Socialist Workers Party.

Breitman's bucket has a hole in it. It doesn't hold water. His thesis relegates the workers to the rumble seat of the student automobile. Don't take our word for it. We are just going to quote, to prove our point of view, Comrade Barnes, the National Organizational Secretary of the Socialist Workers Party, who at the very same Oberlin Conference only a few days apart from Breitman's speech, had the following to say, and we quote from the April 1971 International Socialist Review, comrades, and listen, you can check the quote, and we're going to have some more quotes, you can check all of them. We're scrupulous about these....

Comrade Breit..., George Breitman presented [and this is Barnes] a very convincing case today that we have a bigger, deeper and broader radicalization by far [catch the words -- by far was not Breitman's words, that I could see.] But anyway, that's not important. Today we have a bigger, deeper and broader radicalization by far than in the period preceding the radicalization of the working class in the 1930's.

That's what Breitman said about this thesis. Yes, comrades, of course. That in the period preceding the radicalization of the working class, we can all agree on Barnes's statement and formulation. But it was Breitman's contrary and incorrect formulation and statement which has become scripture in our movement over the past year. Barnes is dead right. Naturally no radicalization that does not involve the working class can be the biggest and deepest. The comrades should check their own material, and they should also ask Comrade Barnes if he stands by that particular position, and who's right on this question, you see. And it's a big one. And Dee referred to it many times, you see. Our job is to prepare for the genuinely deepest, biggest and broadest radicalization, for our preparation to lead in the streets, on the job and in the shop, the coming upsurge of the American working men and women which will be the real biggest, deepest and broadest.

Comrade Breitman elaborates on his thesis. He says, and we quote again:

It's true that they [the students] will never be able to do the whole job themselves, that they need to seek allies among the exploited and oppressed. That they must conduct their struggle in such a way as to make it easier to win these allies.

What? Have you ever heard such errant pandering to the petty-bourgeois prejudices of the students? "Never be able to do the whole job themselves." "Need to seek allies." No, comrades! This is not the attitude of our party! It's the workers which are the central feature in the radicalization, and they, they, the workers seek allies among peripheral and secondary layers like the students and intellectuals. The students don't seek the allies. They're not the center of the world, and of the world radicalization.

Breitman's speech was celebrated throughout our movement, printed in our theoretical journal. That such a speech could be written and delivered and applauded in our party is one of those danger signs we were referring to in our thesis.

In May of 1970, with the military incursion into Cambodia, a sharp and vigorous series of protests occurred on the American campuses. These actions were of national political significance, and were roughly analogous to the wave of university seizures in Japan that had taken place only a brief period before, brief time before.

Not for the Socialist Workers Party leadership. They became instead an inspiration for glowing panegyrics to the so-called "new" social weight of the students and all kinds of non-Marxist, and generally hysterical outbursts about the student radicalization, such as "The 1905 of the American, of the student revolution," and "New York: the Petrograd of the American Revolution." Some of the more famous of those statements. That Oberlin Conference, in our opinion, produced an abundance of these warning signs. Comrade Mary-Alice Waters, one of the leaders of the party, had the following to say, and we want to analyze it critically, because it does sum up in certain ways the party's point of view.

One of the similarities, (and we quote) of the May events here and the French May-June events were the fact that in both cases the small size of the organized revolutionary party prevented the crucial next steps forward from being taken.

You see, that is totally wrong, and we never want to allow that type of idea to take root in our international movement, because it will disorient comrades, it will turn them aside from our perspective. It was not primarily the small size of our French section but its lack of contact in the class. It was not rooted there, it was primarily on the campus. It could not lead the working class struggle. And the comparison between these two events is stretched. The events in France were one of the deepest revolutionary upsurges that humanity has ever seen, involving 10's of millions of workers. Ours was a purely student struggle. Theirs was a prerevolutionary situation, ours was nothing of the kind. The important thing now for the French comrades, and we should draw the lessons too, is to prepare for the next upsurge, and that will be by getting influence in the class. And the French comrades to some degree have adopted, have learned that lesson, which we have not.

"In the United States," Mary-Alice said, "much could have been done nationally to coordinate and organize the strike actions of the revolutionary organizations had the YSA even been four or five times their current size and geographic spread." You see. Well, that's true to a certain sense, but she's talking about the great influence..., she's talking about revolutionary events, and it's hardly true. ~~The wrong lessons are drawn from these events.~~ We can have four or five hundred times the number of student comrades, and we won't make the socialist revolution unless we smash the decisive power of the labor bureaucracy over the minds and bodies of the working class, whether the bureaucrats are Stalinists, as in France, or Meany, as in this country. I will refer, return to this subject later on.

Another quote: "The specter of revolution in the United States in this epoch seemed to them a real possibility [that's the ruling class] for the first time in their lives." The specter of revolution? Do the comrades believe that the specter of revolution appeared in this country a year ago? It was hardly a shadow! The class didn't move! It didn't budge, and these comrades suck out of their thumbs the specter of the socialist revolution in America? We don't think so, comrades, and we say your analysis is wrong. "Profound alterations in the composition and social weight of the student

population." Another quote which I think is especially good: "We should think about the power of the student movement, about its ability to act as a detonator to link up with other layers of the population." We don't think so. Our answer is this: We would be better advised to think and to teach others to think of the immense, limitless power of the working class and its revolutionary capacity and potential. Not only think about it, but orient the party in its direction, and take advantage of the opportunities which will be opening up in that arena.

Well, we don't want to go on with this, I think the basic point is clear to any comrades who have read our press over the past moments, over the past months and years we think that this is another of those warning signs.

When the party uses the term youth, as we continually do, they don't mean just youth -- we want to correct them on this -- they mean student youth. You see, youth itself is a pretty broad term. You have all kinds of youth. There are fascist youth, there are proletarian youth, there are Black youth, male chauvinist youth, capitalist youth -- all kinds of youth. Young rapists, young women, young Healyites, young Compradores, various sorts of youth. But the party is not talking about youth in general, it's talking about student youth, which is all right, but they should say what they're talking about.

Now, we want to keep one thing here in mind for the comrades who may not have been too deeply immersed into our literature in the past, of our movement, because this is not new. You see, our movement has always felt that it is the young workers that would make the revolution, you see. The young, not yet availed of seniority, privileges and loss of energy; Lenin and Trotsky always looked to the young workers, and said so. Did you comrades think that Lenin and Trotsky, or possibly the minority is looking to the older workers to make the revolution? We look to the old people? We want to orient to the old folks home, or something along these lines? Of course not! Everybody's in favor of reaching the young workers and the young people of course, in general. The party is talking about something different. It's talking about students. This is to be the new international panacea for building the Trotskyist movement, a new shortcut to our decisive tasks. We fully, on the other hand, agree with the Transitional Program, which also discusses the youth. Let me quote it:

The Fourth International pays particular attention to the young generation of the proletariat. All of its policies strive to inspire the youth [and here he's talking about the youth of the class] with belief in its own strength and future.

And we'll add the following words from the same section, which is called, in the Transitional Program, "Open the Road to the Woman Worker, Open the Road to the Youth."

There is not and will not be any place for careerism, the ulcer of the old internationals, in the Fourth International. Only those who wish to live for the movement and not at the expense of the movement will find access to us. The revolutionary workers should feel themselves to be the masters. The doors of our organization are wide open to them.

Do you think the door is wide open in our party today to the workers youth comrades? Do you think it's wide open? We don't think so. We don't think so because we think it's the back door that's wide open, to the student youth who we are continually embracing, and embracing with no thought or consideration to the workers. And this whole perspective I've outlined is another of the danger signals which we have read and we are trying to convince the party to read.

We mentioned, as well, our approach to the question of women's liberation, so I assume some tempers can get up here. All of our literature, in our opinion, our entire approach is characterized by the appeal to all women and the downplaying of the class question. This will be the subject of an entire discussion. We will note here that the party ignores the warnings of even one of its own statements on the subject, and I want to quote here from an excellent article, which all the comrades should read, by Evelyn Reed, called "Sex Against Sex, or Class against Class?" It states the case very strongly, and we quote:

Thus class against class must be the guiding line for the struggle of human liberation in general, and women's liberation in particular. No matter how radical it may seem, the substitution of sex hostility for the class struggle by overzealous women would be a dangerous diversion from the real road to liberation. Such a tactic could only play into the hands of the worst enemies of women and of the socialist revolution. Historically the sex struggle was part of the bourgeois feminist movement of the last century. It was a reform movement conducted within the framework of the capitalist system and not seeking to abolish it. But that feminist movement has run its course, achieved its limited aims and the problems we face today must be placed within the context of the class struggle.

Those are strong words, comrades. They run contrary to the day-to-day work of our comrades in the petty-bourgeois women's liberation movement, and there's not only... there's also a working class women's liberation movement, and DeBerry referred to it. You see, the essence of it is this. Our comrades have no choice in this matter but to err because party policy is determined by this call to embrace all the features, all the newness of the campus radicalization. So it flows, then, from that, that you would make these errors. You see, our real job is to teach the class struggle lessons of our entire experience in the women's movement asiall others. The fact hat such things as this can arise inside the movement is another one of those warning signs. This is a document by majority comrades named Sudie and Geb, I don't know these comrades, from the Boston branch, and they state:

Let the bourgeois philosophers worry about the answer to the meaningless question of whether the labor movement is more important than the women's movement, within the socialist revolution. Just like asking which was more important to human life, food or air. Those who insist that the labor movement is more important than the women's movement are only expressing their emotional feeling that the labor movement is more valid than the women's movement, and on this they are wrong.

Well, we don't agree with that, comrade. That's not the attitude of Marxism and of the class struggle, and its another one of those danger signals we're referring to.

Let us raise another of these questions, and that is the question of the class composition of the party. What we think is the worst danger in this regard is the very fact that the party, and the party leadership in the majority do not even recognize the dangers of an alien class composition. Do not recognize it. On the contrary, read Comrade Barnes's report to the last party plenum. He took his magic wand and dismissed the preciously learned lessons of our fight against Shachtman and Burnham and the petty-bourgeois opposition, which is one of the greatest legacies of our entire historical tradition, and he offers up some speculation about how the workers are going to join us in the future. Purely speculation. You see, this makes it sound believable to some of the comrades, this projection of the line, you see. But the refutation does not lie ahead! Right now, we have a living refutation of this point of view, in our steadfast, determined abstention from the living proletarian movements that are on center stage politically at the moment. The GI antiwar fight and the Black and Brown movement. This change and alteration by the party leadership of our traditional attitude on the necessity of a class compo..., proletarian class composition, and DeBerry stated very clearly in his presentation, and the danger of being swamped by alien class elements, this revision is a warning sign, another one of those dangers flashing before the party. It says, "look out, comrades, we're heading in a troublesome direction."

Now we mentioned the gay liberation groups, but there are several things involved, and we want to speak on this subject. First, there's the subject of admitting homosexual members to the party. The rule, as everybody knows now, was wrong to begin with, if for no other reason than that it was unenforcable, and there were other reasons as well. What we want in our party are people whose first love in life is the fight for a socialist world. Their private sexual lives, whether heterosexual or homosexual are not the party's business. I think it's safe to assume that we've always had homosexual comrades in the party, going back many years, at least I'm con-

vinced that that is true. These comrades didn't announce their sexual preferences to the party, but the key thing for us is that we want members who don't, who put their political lives above their sex preference. The party comes first. Our answer is that if we recruit on a high enough level this should not be a problem.

But there's some other questions involved in it too, where there's less agreement. You see we witnessed the pathetic, dismal spectacle, along with the rest of the party, of the leadership putting up a homosexual comrade to argue precisely against the admission of homosexuals, and then a few months later put up the same comrade, utilized this same comrade to present the change in policy. How alien to our tradition and practice. Dishonest, just interwoven with dishonesty and deceit. But that is not the warning sign. That's simply a nauseating little episode in our history that we can hope to forget if there were not these other things that are involved as well.

The signal is this: the warning signal; how can we embrace a movement of so little weight and importance, even on the campus, when we abstain from the crucial layers that we have mentioned above? This is a tremendous reversal of our priorities and perspectives.

And, moreover, to state that the demands of the gay liberation movement are revolutionary, we state, is a, a, a, a, is far off the mark. These are demands, justifiable demands for democratic rights within the society. They can be granted under capitalism, they have been granted in certain capitalist countries, and they are of a reformist character by and large. A democratic character.

One of the biggest of these warning signs is what you just discussed, and I was not able to be here, on the question of the Middle East, and the party's attitude towards it. Our party, the Socialist Workers Party and the Fourth International, was born and steeled in the struggle of the theory and practice of permanent revolution on one hand against the two-stage Stalinist-Menshevik theory of class collaboration betrayal on the other. And nothing epitomizes this more than the call for the victory of the bourgeois democratic revolution, such as the call for a democratic, secular state in Palestine, you see. You can leave the secular out, that's just an..., the secular means that there'll be no state religion. It's the call for a democratic state.

Our role in the past was always to warn the comrades, these comrades particularly in the Arab world, warn them of the danger, alert them to the dangers of adopting any aspect, any trace of the two-stage theory of Menshevism-Stalinism. We're not even warning these comrades; we accept that slogan and embrace it and say that it's the key to the victory in the Middle East. It's not, comrades. It's a petty bourgeois utopia. The simple lessons and outlines of the whole theory of permanent revolution argue eloquently against this. We're not for the democratic secular revolution in the Middle East! It can't be achieved! It can be achieved, those demands and aims of the bourgeois democratic revolution can only be achieved by the Socialist Revolution, that's the whole learning, the essence and content of the theory of permanent revolution, and that's a dangerous mistake to make, because it strikes at the heart of our political theory, history and tradition. At the heart of what we as Trotskyists stood, and have always stood for, and should stand for.

Well, we've had a limited time here to devote to these warning signs. Excuse me if I got a little worked up, there. We think this is a very serious matter. Now we could discuss this for hours, in our opinion, and write documents about it for hours. The political point is clear. We have the opportunity to reverse course, to fight against this threat to the party and its program, to realistically prepare ourselves for the coming workers' upsurge. That's the point. That's why we are standing up now and taking the difficult course of beginning a serious political fight in the party. We do this out of our profound commitment and dedication to the party, and not, as was inferred by the majority speaker, about some association with elements outside the party. It's too disgraceful to answer such slurs. And you should have more character than to make such a terrible slander against us. We're standing up now because of our commitment to the party, not because of the actions of any groupings outside the party, which we're opposed to and have fought. We're a rank and file grouping in the party, and have none of the advantages of the party leadership of being able to devote full time to the questions of

documents and visiting branches and explaining our point of view. Limited material resources. Our strength, we feel, is this, the minority strength. We stand for the party's rich and inspiring Trotskyist tradition, for the working class perspective, and for the party's real future. Because of this, we promise you, comrades, a long and energetic political fight which we're confident will end in the victory of our point of view; a fight that's being fought for very big stakes, relating to the whole question of the socialist revolution in America and the whole future of humanity.

[San Francisco version of same point: "That's why we are standing up now and making this fight at the convention and beyond that. We consider this is going to be a long energetic political fight which we consider will become the most critical in the party's history and for the biggest stakes!"]

Let's move on to our substantiation of our claim that we, the minority not the party leadership, stand in the tradition of Lenin, Trotsky, Cannon, and even of the present older leadership themselves and of the party at an earlier period.

We wish to commence with Comrade Peng Shu-Tse, who is the leading senior active member, politically active member of the entire international Trotskyist movement. Comrade Peng embodies much of the tremendous tradition of our party, steeled in the fight of the second Chinese revolution in the 1920's, the underground fight against Chiang Kai-shek and against Stalinism, murderous Stalinism, which destroyed so many of his comrades; an architect of our program and a giant figure in our world ranks. That's who Comrade Peng Shu-tse is, if you're not familiar with it.

Peng's document, called "A Return to the Road of Trotskyism," is the most important contribution in years to the understanding of the problems and direction of our world movement, it makes those youth revolutions pale before it in its gigantic strength and sagacity. We want to quote Comrade Peng, some of his statements for those of you who didn't read the article or didn't give it the attention that it deserved (and it deserves great attention). Comrade Peng speaking:

In the past period the International on the whole (his words are very direct) has found itself working in and recruiting from primarily petty-bourgeois strata, especially the student movement. To a great degree, of course, this area of work was determined by the objective conditions. Nevertheless our past work in and orientation toward the working class is not what it should have been. Therefore, the reorientation toward and integration into the working class is the most urgent task facing our movement today.

We'll repeat that, and we agree with it:

The reorientation toward and integration into the working class is the most urgent task facing our movement today.

Well, ask Comrade DeBerry if he agrees with these enemies of our party. Is Peng one of these people who is in agreement with the various opponents, unnamed and unspecified? We don't think so. We're in agreement with Comrade Peng. He states his case very powerfully. "...the most urgent task facing our movement today."

Perhaps (he goes on) some of the comrades would object to the call for such a reorientation by saying that our orientation (~~listen to these words, comrades~~) ~~towards the working class~~ has always been understood and not explicitly stated. But the concrete reality of our movement will not support such an objection. We have only to look at the sections in the most industrialized countries of the world, as in Western Europe (and we'll add, as in this country) to discover that in none of these sections do we have any real basis in the working class. The comrades in these sections come mainly from outside the working class, and remain outside the working class. If such a situation is permitted to continue for any length of time, these sections cannot but degenerate.

That's Comrade Peng speaking, and the party hasn't answered him on this. See, in our opinion, as we tried to point out, we have seen some of the warning signs of these, of programmatic degeneration that have begun to

eat away around the corners of our movement. Peng, again, says this:

Replacing the Transitional Program with the strategy of guerrilla warfare [this applies, as you know, to the European and Latin American comrades primarily -- R.L.], neglecting the most serious work in the working class and its traditional class struggle organizations, that is to say the trade unions [and that applies to the SWP -- R.L.] and continuing to adapt ourselves to different petty-bourgeois currents and leaderships [and that damn well applies to the SWP] cannot only not build an International but will lead our movement into a blind alley.

"Will lead our movement into a blind alley." The Transitional Program keeps coming up throughout this discussion, and from our point of view it will continue to do so, and for good reason. Why is that?

The Transitional Program, The Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International, this document is the basic programmatic statement of the world Trotskyist movement. Of course, both sides in the dispute here in the party agree on parts of the document, that is the party leadership certainly, and we agree with the question of crisis of proletarian leadership, the role of Stalinism and so on. But a lot of it is in dramatic conflict with the party leadership. We want to point out some of these areas and points. In our opinion the Transitional Program itself hits the nail and the National Committee of the Socialist Workers Party right on the head, and underlines the validity of the minority position. We quote:

In the struggle for partial and transitional demands, the workers now more than ever need mass organizations, primarily trade unions. The powerful growth of trade unionism in France, the United States, is the best refutation to the preachments of those ultraleft doctrinaires who have been teaching that the trade unions have outlived their usefulness. The Bolshevik-Leninists stand in the front line trenches of all kinds of struggles, even when they involve only the most modest material interests or democratic rights of the working class. He takes active part in mass trade union work for the purpose of strengthening them and raising their spirit of militancy. Only on the basis of such work, only on the basis of such work within the trade unions is successful struggle possible against the reformists, including those of the Stalinist bureaucracy.

Trotsky says, "only on the basis of such work." That is to say, trade union work. He goes on:

It is necessary to establish this firm rule. Self-isolation of the capitulationist variety from mass trade unions, which is tantamount to a betrayal of the revolution, is incompatible with membership in the Fourth International.

Those are very strong words, aren't they comrades? "Incompatible," even, "with membership in the [Fourth] International." The program itself develops a whole series of demands and guidelines for the work, for our work in the class, some of which are not to the point today, but many of which are: the sliding scale of wages and hours, the workers control, workers militia, the trade unions, our attitude on them, factory committees, and so on.

The Transitional Program ends on what we consider a very uplifting note, and we quote:

Workers, men and women of all countries, place yourself under the banner of the Fourth International. It is the banner of your approaching victory.

We have today, by the party leadership, and a majority, a direct challenge to one of the most trailblazing and educational and decisive experiences in our party history in the 1939-1940 fight. To carry out the present course, the party must downplay the lessons in that struggle or else alter them. This also is the reason, by the way, for the paucity in our movement, of classes of study on In Defense of Marxism and The Struggle for a Proletarian Party. We're having one this year, this weekend for the first time in a long time, and we're very eager to see how the question of the necessity of class composition for the party is treated. Only a few years ago these books were thrust into the hands of young comrades, as they should be today. Why? Why is this true? Because the lessons run contrary to

the present party policy, and we think we can prove this to your satisfaction, comrades. We tried to do that in a document, we'll try to do it again here. We quote Trotsky writing to Cannon:

The party has only a minority of genuine factory workers. The non-proletarian elements represent a necessary yeast, and I believe we can be proud of the good quality of these elements, but our party can be inundated by non-proletarian elements, and can even lose its revolutionary character. The task is naturally not to prevent the influx of intellectuals by artificial means, but to orient practically all of the organization towards the factories the strikes and the unions.

Trotsky makes this point:

If we establish seriously such a general orientation, we will avoid a great danger, namely that the intellectual and white collar workers (he makes this distinction, you'll notice) might suppress the worker minority, condemn it to silence, transform the party into a very intelligent discussion club, but absolutely nohabitable for workers.

"Not habitable for workers." Do the comrades think that our party today is habitable for workers? Is that your opinion and judgement on the question? We don't.

As a footnote, we want to compare Comrade Barnes to Comrade Trotsky on one of the questions that arose in Barnes's report there in the documents which you've read, on the question of key plants. First, Comrade Barnes, a clever statement here:

The third justification is the "rooted in key plants," or the Johnny come lately version of the miss the boat theory. It was this that the PL members hammered away at in the corridors at the YSA convention. YSAers would ask them two questions, and would not get very satisfactory answers. One of the questions was, "Which are the key plants? There are hundreds of thousands of plants in this country. If you can tell us today what the key plants will be, then at least we'll begin to listen."

Listen, then, comrades. We'll tell you. We'll tell you, we'll give you an outline as to what some of those key plants are. They're fairly obvious, you see. I doubt the PL Stalinists were exactly sat on their ear by that answer, that there are no key plants in this country. It's an answer which we think is brimming with petty-bourgeois contempt for the working class and its movement, you see. Of course, if you believe, if you believe that the workers are peripheral to the revolutionary struggle, then there are no key plants, but only key campuses, and that, I suggest, is the crucial factor here. But every serious comrade knows what the key plants and industries are in their own area and what will be decisive to the coming movement of the workers. Isn't it clear in this, in this, in the East Bay? We know very well that Fremont, and we've always considered that Fremont would be one, if not the decisive plant. And that, that, that other auto plant out there, in Lopedus (?), near there, the oil refineries out there, we've even oriented toward these plants. That plant on E. 14th St., that Tormey works at, GE, that's an important one, too, we've had demonstrations out there, the party participated in. Do comrades think there are no key plants or decisive industries in the East Bay? What about Detroit? You think there are no key plants there, comrades? What about River Rouge and the whole complex of auto factories? In Chicago, U.S. Steel and Republic Steel, the railroad, the big mills in Gary, these are key plants. In Seattle, it's Boeing. Those two words are synonymous in that city. Can you select some more key plants in that area? You see, of course there are key plants. It's ludicrous to say there aren't, unless you've got something else on your mind. But wait a second, I said here I wanted to compare Barnes to Trotsky; I interjected myself into this discussion. Here's what Trotsky said on this subject in In Defense of Marxism.

A concrete example. We cannot devote enough or equal forces to all the factories, our local organization can choose for its activity in the next period one, two or three factories in its area and concentrate all its forces upon these factories.

Then our conclusion is that Trotsky too was in the "miss the boat tendency," or the Johnny Come Lately version of the miss the boat tendency, you see. Our answer, "The Boat is the Titanic!" Which is not rooted in our

party history or tradition?

I'm going to have to cut out a few quotes, but I do want to have a few more, because they contrast so sharply with what Comrade DeBerry said. We'll quote here from Comrade Cannon, about we won't judge, Comrade DeBerry said we won't judge things on the class background, and so on, here's what Cannon had to say:

Our movement judges things and people from a class point of view. Our aim is the organization of a vanguard party to lead the proletarian struggle for power, and the reconstitution of society on socialist foundations. That is our science. We judge all people coming to us from another class by the extent of their real identification with our class, and the contributions they can make to aid the proletariat in its struggle against the capitalist class. That's the framework which we objectively consider the problems of the intellectuals in the movement. It is hardly likely that in the future anyone will be permitted to make pretensions to leadership in our party unless he makes a clean break with his alien class environment (and that includes the campus -- R.L.) and comes over to live in the labor movement. Mere visiting will not be encouraged.

And I wish that rule was enforced today. You see, we say compare that statement and compare the whole spirit and life of these documents of the 1935 fight and, 1939 fight, and The Coming American Revolution speech, and many of our articles and press. Compare that to the statements of our student leaders in New York, who could not tell a time clock from Big Ben or a sundial; in our opinion; and who have a cynical and contemptuous attitude expressed throughout this document and statement of Comrade Barnes for the working class.

Well, we just want to end here on this subject of quotes by quoting a couple of quotes from our current party leaders, quotes which also were quoted in the document by Barbara Gregorich and the rest of the other comrades. Some of you may not have read it, we think that they're worth repeating, because we want to emphasize what they have to say. You see, Comrade Dobbs says,

Talent is very useful, as are adroit tactical maneuvers. But nobody can cheat the laws of the class struggle, through talent, maneuvers or any other gimmick. To win leadership in fact as well as in name, and to apply class struggle politics in union tactics we must have strength in the ranks, ("strength in the ranks"). Our strategic orientation is to build an independent mass revolutionary party. All our tactical maneuvers must be subordinated and coordinated around this strategic aim. To build a mass party, our primary tactical orientation must at all times (and those are Comrade Dobbs's words -- R.L.) be oriented, be toward the main stream of the organized working class.

"At all times." Comrade Kerry has a statement here which really stands out and shines. A glowing restatement and reaffirmation of our party's traditions. We quote Comrade Kerry:

The radicalization of the American workers will take place via the unions, especially in the mass production industries. The prospect determines our basic orientation towards this concrete milieu.

Not because "it's moving." Some of the comrades like to say "we just orient towards things that move, you see. When the workers, then we'll orient towards that. The students move, then we orient.... No! Different, ~~different point of view here.~~

This prospect, (he says) determines our basic orientation towards this concrete milieu. Any diversion from this course, any detours away from our proletarian orientation under the illusion of finding greener pastures can only serve to disorient the party and render us incapable of playing our role as leavening agent in the process of radicalization.

What a tremendous restatement of the party attitude. "Can only serve to disorient the party and render us incapable of playing our role as leavening agent in that process of radicalization." And a very good choice of terms.

Now let's turn the subject of our inquiry here in a little different direction. We're not trying to embarrass these comrades by making quotes out of the past. You see, Comrade Taplin here in our branch, if you'll remember, in an earlier discussion, said we had dug up goldmines of quotes. And we responded that we thought we was right. And in this discussion you see what we haven't even done in my opinion, we're just ~~scratching~~ scratching the surface of this very rich lode which really represents the party tradition.

Now we admit, of course, first of all that there are quotes and then there are quotes. Anyone can leaf through the party archives. Being a radical archeologist is not the same as being an architect of a living party policy. That's the key to it. And with that we agree with the party leadership. We study the lessons of the past only in order to orient and build the party. We study the past in order to build the party in the present and the future, that's the key to quotes and every other aspect of our party building. If the comrades, regardless of quotes, if the leadership has a better course, they're perfectly, perfectly justified in saying that the old road was limited, and that we've found something new and better for the party. We'll agree with that. But we don't agree that they have found such a road. And for that purpose we want to put these quotes in context, because they didn't arise because Trotsky and Cannon thought they would just announce for all times we were going to do work among the working class. They arose for a reason, and I think that we can discuss this and make clear what the general and world historic context of this question is.

Every great international workers party has faced an ultimate historic test. It's solution or failure was the key to the life or the death of that particular movement. The Second International faced and fell before the mighty historic reformist process that engulfed and destroyed it as a revolutionary instrument. The Third International faced and fell before the rise of the Soviet bureaucracy, the ebb of the world revolution, and the isolation of the Soviet Union, the first workers state.

What about us? What is our test? That is rooted in our past and our present. We broke with the Communist International and launched ourselves onto an independent path armed as no party has ever been armed in world history, with a wealth of theory and theoretical insight. We took some of the greatest leaders of the fallen party, comrades like Cannon here, Chen Tu-hsiu, the founder of Chinese Communism in that country, people like Comrades Peng and Chen, other figures, some of them didn't stay so long, comrades like Sneevliet, and Tombalaka, and Specter, who was the national secretary of the Canadian Communist Party, a real wealth of the leaders; we could go on at length on this. And plus, of course, many of the leaders in the Soviet party as well.

But you see the key to it was we took virtually none of the proletarian cadres of the Third International, that is, none on the broad historic scale, and that was the key to the problems that faced us ever since, and the key to our present problems. See, our test has always been this, the great historic test of our international movement has been to smash and sever the hold of the old reformist movements over the political allegiances of the vanguard militant workers. On that test, of being able to sever that political allegiance, our movement will live or die, you see. And it was that that inspired all the quotes which we have referred to in order to illustrate our argument, you see. The comrades could see, they could see and feel from the vantage point of the 1930's that a movement like ours, up against such tremendous historic odds, with so many difficulties seemingly plaguing it, and we'll refer to those, such a party would inevitably, and Trotsky and Cannon and the rest of them saw it happen before their eyes in many countries, would inevitably try to find a short cut around the terrible reality which faced us at every turn.

Everywhere we looked in the 1930's and the 1940's our small movement seemed unable to cross that bridge, that key test that I referred to. In some countries we got so close we could almost touch it, or taste it, like in Greece, in Vietnam, in China, only to have, when it looked as if we could lead a big and powerful movement, only to have the terror of Stalinism, imperialism or fascism, and sometimes all three, destroy our young parties and the cadres. In Europe especially we fought under terrible conditions of isolation, World War II, and the post-war Stalinist resurgence which took a tremendous toll of our theoretical point of view. We tried very hard in these countries to build proletarian parties based on the Trotskyist model in the 1930's, that established in Trotsky's lifetime. Most of our international leadership in Europe was lost to murder and assassination

during the Second World War years, in a period of just 4,5,6 years. Comrades like Trotsky, Sedov, Ta Tu-to (?), in Vietnam, Comrades Widelin, Misoyo, Marcel Hique (?), the whole majority and leadership of the International Executive Committee of the international movement was lost, murdered outright, a whole generation of leaders. You see, the simple explanation of Pabloism is this. Please listen carefully, comrades, we have to make it very concise. The simple explanation is this: after years of frustration, disappointment and failure, these comrades, and for reasons that we can fully sympathize with, even while we disagree with them, these comrades tried to find a shortcut around the terrible reality they faced in the Forties and Fifties and the Sixties. The result of that? The result was Pabloism, deep entry, lack of confidence in our own independent capacity, adaptation and capitulation to alien political forces. That's the historical root, and they could not pass that test.

In Latin America we've seen the same thing also. For years, decades, we tried valiantly to build proletarian parties based on the Transitional Program in a number of crucial countries. Chile, Argentina, Peru, Bolivia, and elsewhere. Comrade Blanco's contribution was one of the most inspiring and profound contributions to our world movement, applying the Transitional Program to a living struggle of the peasants and oppressed in his own country, you see.

(Well, we do indeed have different clocks. You serious?)

The results were not encouraging. The thing we faced was the -- I made the comment because Comrade Taplin's about four or five minutes off in his timekeeping. It's not important. The results were not encouraging, and this, that inability, that constant frustration of those aims in Latin America, this explains the desire, and it's a very healthy revolutionary desire, to find a short-cut in rural guerrilla warfare, and the thesis of armed struggle. You see, those comrades tried, they tried to do it the way we proposed, and they feel it doesn't work. They're wrong. They're wrong, in our opinion. But that lays the basis for the short-cut theory, and you see what's being prepared now in Argentina. Follow the press, comrades. It's going to come to no good end, as far as we can tell.

Now, what about the USA. Is there any similarity here? Yes, comrades, there is a very decisive similarity. Here we've built in this country one of the most illustrious examples of a proletarian Leninist party led by Cannon back in the Thirties and Forties. We labored through the hard years of Stalinist domination, of the Shachtmanite attempt to destroy our program, of the World War II years, of the jailing of the party leadership. All things seemed ready at the end of the Second World War to catapult -- we were in a position to catapult ourselves out of our small size, out of the war years, given the fact that the Stalinists were discredited, our ranks were overwhelmingly proletarian, and the post-war upsurge was at hand. We appeared ready to take command of the workers movement and lead the whole thing, inspire it to the most momentous social revolution in history. And read the documents of that period. They should make that clear. Read Cannon's The Coming American Revolution speech, read the American theses, they're imbued with that desire, that revolutionary desire to lead the American workers. The party then was a party ready, willing and able to go all the way.

Well, we know what happened, then. It was these historical conditions then that are decisive in shaping the.... The first villain is the historical conditions, in shaping the party's future. The post-war restabilization of imperialism plunged the party into the dismal, awful years of McCarthyism. That wasn't the worst of it, you see. We can endure any kind of test like this. We can survive any direct onslaught. But what was critical here was not something that was direct, that took place all at once, that tested the party's courage and its fibre in a single moment. What was presented was the quarter-century-long relative passivity of the working class, which is the backdrop for the entire development of our party over this period of a quarter of a century. It was -- in our country -- just that that has laid the basis for our own American short-cut theory.

The student radicalization began to develop in the Fifties and Sixties. At first, the party approached somewhat gingerly, skeptically, and then began to revise its attitude. The students seemed so wonderful now. The comrades were shocked, they expected..., some of the older comrades expected that the youth of this generation would be just like the Shachtmanite youth in the Thirties, it would be like Natie Gould and the "giggle caucus." And when the youth appeared differently like that, the party judged it not on the personality, not on the broad class question and class criteria that we had been taught to use in our movement, by the personality of individuals

involved. On that basis, our theoretical armour has been dropped, slowly and surely dropped, and new theories developed about the revolutionary potential of the student movement and of these other layers in society. The comrades feel that all that old Cannon stuff, that's just pie in the sky, where here, right in the hand, right in the hand we have all of the wonderful student youth plus our big influence in the antiwar movement, the women's liberation movement, the gay movement, and so on, as if that is going to be enough to build the kind of party that we're talking about to meet the greatest test that class society has ever offered to a revolutionary party.

We don't think it'll be that simple. I think of the party's attitude as the "Yellow Brick Road" theory to the socialist revolution. We're all going to march off, like, to the castle in the sky, every step forward, every moment, and every step, something wonderful, with new surprises springing up behind every bush, new mass movements to embrace and hug, and so on. That's not the way politics works.

That's the background to our development of our American version of the short-cut, corresponding concretely, corresponding directly to the short-cut theories that have arisen in Latin America and in Europe, you see. All this may seem normal to you, comrades, 'cause you live in it, you see. But a short-cut theory, it is, nonetheless, in spite of how nice everything may seem. A short-cut theory, that puts the students before the workers in the historic process. You see, because we still haven't cracked, and the party leadership has no perspective or explanation on how we're going to crack that same Gordian knot that faced us thirty years ago, and faced us yesterday. The hegemony of the labor bureaucracy, whether Stalinist or otherwise, in the mass workers movement. That is still, as it was in Trotsky and Cannon's day, our chief challenge and unavoidable goal. That's why they made those statements, they were farsighted enough to see that these questions, these short-cut theories would arise everywhere in our movement. An attempt to derail us from our proletarian orientation, that's why they stated the case so strongly and that's why they offered up, as Comrade Taplin said, a goldmine to those comrades in the future that would have an opportunity to fight on this question and fight for the orientation of the party along its traditional lines. Not because it's traditional. Because it's still right, because all the same factors remain in force, although there are new opportunities for us and new possibilities for putting things into practice the right way.

You see, that's why the new theories are wrong. They don't help us to solve our historic task, but rather to avoid it. The point is this, see, the point is this, from our point of view, everything's going to come out in the historic wash. You see, we want the results to be positive, not just another demoralizing, debilitating defeat and regression for our movement that we look back and see where the mistake took place. The tasks and lessons of the Thirties and Forties apply today, but with added vigor, because now the conditions make our victory far more realizable, as long as we don't fall victims, as we are doing today, to any short-cuts away from the historic tradition of Bolshevism, of Leninism, and of the Transitional Program and the working class orientation. And that's precisely why we use these quotes, and that's why we're raising our point of view in the party. Our attitude is the party must orient to the class, to the working class, comrades, that should be the motto and symbol and insignia of the party today, in this period.

It's easy to see a short-cut, a short-circuit, when someone else is doing it, as in Europe and Latin America, but when you're inside the real process, it's hard to pin it down, because everything seems like it's going right, or it doesn't seem to be that way. What we presented here was very condensed. ~~We could develop our thesis at much greater length.~~ We wish to turn now to some of the more practical aspects of the present dispute.

The majority comrades say, and this we challenge, that when the class moves, we will not abstain. We will be ready to intervene, movement to movement, and however they say we'll intervene. We say it's wishful thinking. Pie in the sky, because when the class moves today, when it engages in some kind of action, we scurry in the other direction. I want to try to prove this point, because it is decisive. All the rest of it is theoretical, this is decisive.

The GI movement. Here is a situation in this country of hundreds of thousands of primarily working class youth, heavily Black and Brown, in semi-revolt against the army and the military establishment. Obviously, there

is where the future of this country lies. Our party itself pioneered in explaining the military question to the broad radical movement. It's one of the biggest contributions we made in the past period, and we campaigned on this question in the antiwar formations and taught them many of the lessons that they learned. Then we achieved what was one of our most remarkable victories of this entire decade in the Fort Jackson case, and suddenly, shortly thereafter, we halted and almost all organized GI work, that is leafletting at the bases, attempting to set up GI papers and committees and so on, almost all of that has disappeared. And we face a situation today of abstaining from that arena of work. Here was the biggest opportunity we've had to make our contribution to our generation. These GIs are frustrated, angry, they feel no national organization, they have no perspective. What they need precisely is an organization like ours, like our youth movement, that can orient towards them, give them a national perspective, and embrace that movement and begin to overcome the frustration and feeling of impotence and so on. A conscious policy might have in the past, and still now could play a tremendous role in changing even objec..., in affecting even the objective conditions in this country. It's one of the places where we have that opportunity. A campaign in the military, that's what's called for in our regard, a campaign towards the proletarian youth, heavily Black and Brown, who make up the army. A campaign of leafletting, of turning our attention, whereas today we get hardly a report, hardly a footnote in our party on this question. You see, the GI movement is not in the future. The majority can say to us, as it does, that, well you talk about trade unions, you know, but it's all very abstract, it's in the future. We respond, that's true. Much of it is in the future. But the GI movement is now, and you abstain from that too, and that's in the present! Why, how do you explain this, you see?

We explain it because these proletarian GI youth don't fit in with our student environment, in both the party and the YSA, and they don't fit in with the student youth perspective that we've enunciated for the party. They conflict, and that's the reason that we've turned decisively in the direction of the students. The GIs, as far as we're concerned, are..., as far as we're concerned is a secondary fight, and not the most important thing; deserves some commentary in the press.

Now the question of Black and Brown comes us, and this point we're enthusiastic about discussing, very enthusiastic. We've heard -- we're in a small party, comrades, so word gets back, you know. You can't spread the various gossip and bullshit that's gone around the party without people finding out about it. We find out now that the party majority tells people that we're antinationalist. That is, "these people say, they don't disagree with nationalism, but they really are." No! We're really not! If we were, we would say it! We're really not! We're really in favor of it, you see. And this is the question we want to discuss, because this is the question of the socialist revolution in America! So, you can continue with the slanders if you wish, but we don't think it's the proper way to conduct a discussion. The majority comrades state that a proletarian orientation for the party would be antinationalist. That is what they imply. We say no, now could you conceive of such an idea? The American working class is not the same as in the 1930s. Don't project sterile formulas, comrades, drawn from the thirties onto the present and coming radicalization. In the intervening years, the working class has done some embracing of its own. It's embraced millions and millions of Black and Brown people, that used to live on the country, in the south, in the southwest, in those years. The class today is Black to an amazing degree. Stand outside any major production plant in basic industry and steel, auto, etc., and what do you see? An enormous army of Black and Brown people marching in to do work. Not the small numbers that we find on the campus, but thousands, hundreds of thousands and millions of Black workers and youth. Everything, they've got going for them. They're young and they're Black and Brown. The non-whites in this country are overwhelmingly proletarian, that's the key to this question. Overwhelmingly proletarian, and they're the key to the socialist revolution. We say the hell with all this talk about the party that has the youth will have the, will make the social revolution. We're specific on this question. The party that has the young Black and Brown workers will make the socialist revolution. That's the key to the socialist revolution in this country. And that's where the national question comes in, as well, you see. That's where, with our press and party turned in that direction, the direction of industry, that's where we can meet, talk to and recruit the young Black and Brown workers that can make the difference. That should be easier for us with our understanding of nationalism and the national question, and our understanding of how it aids the revolutionary process. Don't distort it, comrades. We're stating it very clearly, our attitude on

nationalism. On the job is the one place I can think of, and you can think of too, comrades, where our white comrades as well as, especially our white comrades can talk to and get a hearing from Third World people and recruit them. They're not going to listen to you in the community, they're not going to listen to you on the campus, and for good reason. They're not interested in our views there, or are only semi-interested, or a small number are interested. On the job we can reach these people because there we share a common oppression, a common living situation, a common ability. They have to relate to us. We're discussing common problems, and they will, and do. That's what the party leadership is most hostile to in this Proletarian Orientation document. That's who we're going to reach. And when the Black and Brown workers come into our organization, it's not going to be so hospitable for students. We're going to make it hospitable for them, not for the students, because that's the key to the socialist revolution. The party that will lead the American revolution will be a party whose face is turned towards the Black, Chicano and Puerto Rican working class youth ~~of this~~ of this country; it will understand the dual aspects of national and proletarian oppression and exploitation. This is decisive. The party, not the party whose face is turned towards Berkeley or Christopher Street, that's well and good enough in itself, but the party that's turned towards the working class youth will make the day, make the revolution in this country.

What we are doing today is building a party increasingly petty-bourgeois, hostile to these elements that we want to, we should be embracing. Our explanation of the revolutionary thrust of nationalism is fine. But we approach it as commentators on the question. DeBerry talks about a crisis of leadership in the Black movement, and of course we're just commenting on that, we have no place to intervene in that question. (How much time do I have, comrade? Am I done? Ans: about three minutes)

OK, I'm going to have to summarize, and leave out some material. So that, we think, is a critical question, and we absolutely reject any implication, ridiculous -- think about the thing, comrades, think about the thing. We reject any implication that an orientation towards the working class is turning your back on nationalism. That's childish. The other would tend to be more the truth, I would say. Wouldn't you, comrades? Industry is where the Blacks are, that's where the army of Black and Brown people are, that we can relate to, and we have the experience to really provide answers on the job. The Black Muslims don't have that program. What are they going to do in a Ford plant, and so on. Offer up Elija Muhammad's thirteen points of membership? We have the Transitional Program. Our demands in industry. We can cut a trailblazing path among these young workers, and do a job in that direction if we want to.

Now I'm going to finish by taking up that slur, disgraceful slur that Comrade DeBerry presented before this party, attempting to make, in the most direct way we've had yet, of attempting to make an amalgam between loyal comrades, with long records of party building, without an ounce of basis or proof, making a charge that we are in collusion, or collaboration or in agreement with outside political tendencies. Want me to run, it down? He says, do you agree, you seem to agree with these people. We don't agree with PL -- that 's one of the groups you're talking about. Do we agree with PL? Yeah. Yes, comrade, we think that Mao's thought is wonderful, so we're in a wonderful, we've got a wonderful little bloc going for us. We're Trotskyists, they're Maoists, and we're in agreement on one thing, here. No, we're not in agreement with those people, and the leadership of the party knows goddamn well that that's a slur and a lie. Why do you inject this into this discussion? Why do you raise such a thing in this discussion? No, we reject that, and that question doesn't have to be answered. Our position flows from the tradition of our party. Make that amalgam. See, that's the real amalgam, if you want to talk about associations. Our, talk about our association with the party tradition, with Cannon, with Trotsky, with a living comrade, like Peng, who is one of the foremost architects of our party policy. And slurs like that have no place. that

Let me just end our presentation by asserting/what we think is the key to the future of our party is beginning, taking those steps to take our roots in the class, to prepare for the coming upsurge of the workers, which even the majority says may be very close, happen very explosively, quickly, and so quickly maybe we'll get passed by or something if we're not there. We should be there, preparing to sink our roots in the working class movement, so that someday we can say, like the party in 1945 and '46 could say, in the words of Cannon, what we believe are immortal words for the party, that this is the party that believes in the unlimited power and capacity of the working class, and no less in its own ability to lead them to storm and victory.